

# YOUR WEDDING

*everything*

*you need to know*



*to organise your*

# CHUPPAH

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## How this booklet can help you

This information booklet has been prepared by Etz Chayim Progressive Synagogue to help you streamline the preparations for your wedding, by informing you of all the requirements as concisely as possible.

The wedding guide booklet comes with some associated material:

- Form 13: The Notice of Intended Marriage
- Information about arranging your Wedding Call-up
- An outline of costs associated with organising your chuppah
- Synagogue Membership application form and information (if applicable)

Please read all the information carefully before you make an appointment with the rabbi or the synagogue administrator. We want your wedding arrangements to go as smoothly as possible for you, so you can enjoy the time before the wedding as much as the day itself.

# Customs and Traditions

There are many unique and special customs associated with Jewish weddings. One thing that marks a Jewish wedding apart from all others is the chuppah, or canopy, under which the bridal couple stands during the ceremony. The chuppah is made of silk, velvet or similar material hung like a small ceiling from four poles. It is often embroidered with a saying from the Bible. A favourite is the one from the book of Jeremiah which is also found in the marriage blessings: The sound of happiness and the sound of rejoicing, the voice of the groom and the voice of the bride. Quite often too, the chuppah is decorated with flowers.

The chuppah reminds us of many things. In Biblical days, the bridal couple were led to a specially prepared tent to spend their wedding night. The chuppah may stand for the tent. It may also stand for the tallit with which a groom used to cover his bride. When someone took another person under his cape, he was offering his protection. So when a groom put his tallit around his bride, he took her under his protection. Primarily, however, the shelter provided by the chuppah is a symbol of the Jewish home that the bride and groom will create together.

The Jewish wedding actually consists of two ceremonies—betrothal and marriage. The wedding begins with a welcome to the bride and the groom: *Bruchim haba'im*. Often the bride circles the groom three times, representing the threefold expression of betrothal in the prophet Hosea: "I betrothe you to me forever..." A traditional blessing, *Mi Adir*, is sung at this point and the rabbi may address the couple, and with them their family and friends. The rabbi then recites the blessing of betrothal over a cup of wine. Often the parents are invited to give the bride and groom a sip from the cup. The bride and groom exchange rings, each reciting the betrothal pledge: "Behold, you are consecrated unto me by this ring, according to the law of Moses and Israel". While traditionally the groom gives the ring to the bride as a symbol of the price that he paid for the bride, the double ring ceremony we have today emphasises the egalitarian nature of a progressive Jewish wedding as well as mutual affection and commitment of the bride and groom to each other.

Following the ceremony of the rings, the rabbi reads the ketubah, or marriage contract. The ketubah includes the date and the place of the ceremony, the names of the bride and groom and the vows they have entered into. In addition, there is sometimes a personal word from the rabbi to the couple at this point in the ceremony.

After the reading of the ketubah, the seven wedding blessings (sheva brachot) are recited. These blessings end with praise of God who has created joy and gladness, groom and bride, love and companionship, pleasure and delight, peace and harmony.

At the conclusion of the seven blessings, both bride and groom again drink from the same cup of wine. Finally, a glass is placed on the floor, and the groom breaks it under his foot. The wedding is over and the guests shout: Mazel Tov! Good Luck!

Many reasons are given for the custom of smashing the glass. Some scholars say it has to do with the ancient belief that this will keep evil spirits away. Some view it as a reminder of the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. Others see it as a symbol of the fragility of life: even on the most joyous occasions we must remember that life includes sorrows. The couple is challenged to play their part in making the world whole.

A Jewish marriage is seen as a partnership between the bride, the groom and God.

The unique symbols and blessings, rooted in tradition, express the hope that the future will be a bright and joyous one for the bride and groom.

# Organising Your Wedding

## Legal Issues: You Can't Just Elope!

Commonwealth Government regulations require that the legal document Notice of Intended Marriage must be registered between eighteen months and one month plus one day before the wedding day, in the presence of both partners.

All the legal paperwork required is completed at the interview with the synagogue administrator. You need to provide the necessary documents and information listed under 'Required Documents & Details' in this guide. Keep in mind that if the paperwork is not completed one month and one day prior to your wedding, your wedding will not be able to proceed on your chosen date.

## Required Documents & Details

- NOIM (Form 13): Names of the bride, the groom and parents of the bride and groom.
- For a person born in Australia: a birth certificate or extract.
- For a person born overseas: birth certificate or passport issued by a government of an overseas country, showing the date and place of the party's birth (if unavailable, bring a statutory declaration attesting your age and identity).
- Divorce certificates, civil and religious (if applicable).
- Death certificate of deceased spouse (if applicable).
- Conversion certificate (if applicable).
- Parents' consent if under age—girls 16 years/boys 18 years (forms are available from the office).
- Both parents' Ketubot (Jewish Marriage Certificate) or other Jewish identification.

**If you do not have these documents, please contact the office. We cannot register your Notice of Intended Marriage without these documents.**

## Requirements for a Chuppah Wedding

If you are already married to one another according to civil law and are now proceeding with a religious wedding, you will need to provide only the documentation listed below:

- Civil marriage document.
- Names of the bride, the groom and parents of the bride and groom. Please note we require Hebrew names, including mothers' Hebrew name eg Moshe ben Aharon u'Miriam/Aviva bat Shimon v'Sara.
- Conversion certificate (if applicable), or parents' Ketubot, or other Jewish identification. Even if the conversion took place at a Progressive Judaism Victoria Bet-Din, we will need to see the certificate.



# Organising Your Wedding

## Making the Appointments

To begin the arrangements for your wedding, you will have to discuss your wedding with two people: the rabbi who will be conducting the ceremony, and the synagogue administrator who does all the paperwork.

Contact the Etz Chayim office on 9563 9208 for an appointment with the rabbi.

You can contact the synagogue administrator on 9563 9208, for an appointment during office hours, to register for your wedding. Please make sure you see the administrator eight to ten weeks before your wedding to complete all the paperwork

## Meeting with the Administrator

The synagogue administrator has two primary tasks in helping your wedding come together. First, the administrator is responsible for ensuring all legal requirements have been met so that the Notice of Intended Marriage can be registered. The paperwork required for the registration to be completed is listed above.

Secondly, the administrator takes down all your details for the synagogue's ritual requirements, and makes the arrangements for your wedding aliyah (aufruf) and kiddush following it, and for the wedding ceremony itself. The administrator, in consultation with the officiating rabbi, will work out with you when your wedding aliyah will take place, who you would like to have called to the Torah on the day of your wedding aliyah and how many people should be catered for at the kiddush.

Concerning the chuppah, the administrator will discuss with you whether the ceremony will be in a courtyard or the synagogue hall or other private space, whether you want music as part of your ceremony, and what your floral requirements are.

## Meeting with the Rabbi

Both partners will meet with the officiating rabbi at least three times before the wedding. Your first meeting should take place about ten weeks before the wedding, around the time you first meet with the administrator.

### First Meeting with the Rabbi

The purpose of the first meeting is for you and the rabbi to get to know each other. This informal discussion will give you a chance to see if you can “connect” with the rabbi and to decide whether he or she is a good fit for the sort of ceremony you envisaged.

### Preparing for the Wedding

Most rabbis of the Progressive Judaism Victoria offer couples the opportunity to participate in Prepare Enrich, a program designed to help couples learn more about themselves and their relationship. Prepare Enrich is a detailed multi-choice questionnaire which can identify some of the strengths in your relationship as well as areas that may need work. Its use within the Progressive Judaism Victoria communities has proven to be helpful in giving couples insight into issues they may confront in their married partnership. Prepare Enrich is an on-line activity, it normally takes about an hour to fill in the Prepare responses. A processing fee applies for Prepare Enrich.

If you choose not to participate in Prepare Enrich, your rabbi will still want to explore the issues of marriage with you. You are encouraged to share with the rabbi your feelings about partnerships, child-rearing and the place of Judaism in your lives.

## Final Meeting with the Rabbi

**A**t this meeting the rabbi will discuss the details of the wedding ritual to ensure that you understand the process, and so that your wedding ceremony proceeds as you want it. If you have completed Prepare Enrich, the confidential results will be discussed at this meeting.

A Jewish wedding ceremony always includes certain elements, as described at the beginning of this guide. There are, however, some choices regarding music. Discuss your music preferences with the rabbi. Only Hebrew songs deemed appropriate by the rabbi and cantor can be included.

Any questions you may have about the ceremony should be raised at this meeting.

## Synagogue Membership

**A**s you begin your married life together, we would encourage you to join a synagogue. Synagogue membership will entitle you to all synagogue services and is a meaningful step towards creating a Jewish life and home together. We include some information on Synagogue membership in your Wedding Kit.



## Aufruf: Wedding Aliyot

**Y**ou may choose to start your wedding celebrations with the traditional aufruf. The aufruf is a festive occasion for the whole community, an opportunity to congratulate the couple and share in the joy of the wedding to come. The bride and groom may be called to the Reading of the Torah on a Shabbat morning prior to the wedding. Immediate members of the bride and groom's families (normally parents) may be honoured with a further aliyah.

Those called to the Torah should wear a tallit and appropriate synagogue attire onto the bima, and be able to read the brachot (blessings) for the Torah reading.

A lovely custom is to invite an additional four members of the family or close friends to hold a tallit over the betrothed couple during their wedding aliyah, symbolising their approaching chuppah.

When choosing people to hold the tallit above you during your wedding aliyah, please consider that they must be able to hold the tallit up high for several minutes.

Invitations for aliyot will be sent by the Etz Chayim office to the people you have chosen.

Please complete the Aufruf Date Request form so that we may review available dates for your call up.

## Organising your Kiddush

**I**t is traditional for the couple or their parents to host the congregational kiddush following their aufruf, so that they may share their joy and celebration with the entire congregation. The kiddush generally consists of light refreshments.

The kiddush is prepared and organised by the Etz Chayim L'Chayim catering group. Please contact the Etz Chayim office on 9563 9208 to discuss your requirements. The office will contact you about two weeks before the aufruf to confirm all details.

# The Wedding Day

## Bedeken & Signing the Documents

**B**edeken is an intimate and private ceremony that precedes the chuppah. Traditionally it is when the groom lifts the veil of his bride-to-be, to be sure it is the woman he intends to marry, and then replaces her veil, reciting a short blessing. In recent years the bedeken has also provided couples an opportunity to gather together with immediate family and close friends and really set the tone for the celebration.

In many cases, the Bedeken is also the moment when the formal wedding documents are reviewed and signed.

## The Chuppah

**T**he wedding begins with a welcome to the bride and the groom a short address to the couple, and with them their family and friends. The rabbi then recites the blessing of betrothal over a cup of wine. The bride and groom exchange rings, and the ketubah, or marriage contract is publicly read. After the reading of the ketubah, the seven wedding blessings (sheva brachot) are recited. At the conclusion of the seven blessings, both bride and groom again drink from the same cup of wine. Finally, a glass is placed on the floor, and the groom breaks it under his foot. The wedding ceremony itself only takes approximately 20–25 minutes but is seen as a sacred and solemn ceremony and should be treated as such.

## Yichud

**I**n some communities it is traditional to escort the bride and groom, now husband and wife, to a private room immediately following the ceremony, where they have an opportunity to spend a few moments in each other's company (*Yichud* means alone-together).

For couples who have fasted until the ceremony, Yichud is breaking of the fast time.

## The Witnesses

**Y**ou must have two witnesses to sign each of your marriage documents, both the civil certificate and your ketubah (Jewish marriage contract).

You do not necessarily need the same two witnesses for the two documents — you can choose to have different people witness your civil certificate to those who sign your ketubah.

The witnesses for the civil documents must be Australian citizens over 18 years of age and may be related to the bride and groom. The witnesses who sign your ketubah must be Jewish, they must be able to sign their names in Hebrew and they cannot be immediate relatives, i.e., they cannot be parents, siblings or children of either the bride or the groom.

## Your Ketubah

**T**he ketubah, or Jewish marriage contract, is one of the central items of the marriage ceremony and an important legal document in Jewish law, setting out the rights and obligations of the partners in the marriage.

The synagogue will provide you with a standard ketubah as a matter of course, but you may prefer a more elaborate, personalised illuminated ketubah, which is a piece of art in itself and suitable for framing to hang in your home. You may wish to write your own wedding vows to be included in your own personalised ketubah. In this case, you must work on these with the rabbi, have them translated and incorporated into your personalised ketubah.

If you are interested in obtaining a personalised ketubah, please speak to the synagogue administrator as soon as possible, as art ketubot must be ordered from the artist well in advance of the wedding.

# Policies and Procedures

## The Wedding Venue

**Y**ou may choose to have your wedding at Etz Chayim Progressive Synagogue. The sanctuary at Etz Chayim can hold up to 130 people. If you prefer a different venue, you can arrange to use other PJV synagogues at additional cost. You may find the following contact and seating information helpful:

**Temple Beth Israel**, 76 Alma Road St. Kilda, ph. 9510 1488

- The Friedlander synagogue seats 110 people
- The main synagogue seats 800 people

**Leo Baeck Centre**, 33-35 Harp Road Kew, ph. 9819 7160

- The synagogue seats 250 people

**Kehillat David HaMelech (Kedem)**, 177 Kooyong Road, Prahran, ph. 8500 3084

- Multi-purpose hall accommodates 110 people

You may also hold your wedding ceremony in your private home or private garden, with the approval of the officiating rabbi, but not in public venues such as hotels, restaurants or reception halls. The intention is to preserve the religious character of the ceremony and to ensure that it remains an impressive event for everyone.

Please note that you must arrange for four people to hold the posts of the chuppah during an outdoor ceremony. If there is inclement weather, the wedding will be held indoors using the same chuppah. If an outdoor wedding is planned, there must be provision for inclement weather.

## The Wedding Photography

We ask you to ensure that your guests and any professional photographers you may hire understand our policy regarding photography during the ceremony and respect it.

The PJV congregations do not allow wedding ceremonies to be 'taken over' by cameras, flash lights and photographers. We accept their use for the bridal procession, the signing of the certificate and the breaking of the glass.

At Etz Chayim Progressive Synagogue still photography with flash is not permitted during the religious part of the ceremony. However, video cameras are allowed if the camera is fixed in one place prior to the commencement of the ceremony, where it will not create any obstruction, and thereafter not monitored or moved in any way by the camera operator until the ceremony is over. Please discuss the use of a video camera with the officiating rabbi.

At all times, we request that you ensure the photography remains as unobtrusive as possible.

## Floral Decorations

You may wish to decorate the chuppah and sanctuary with flowers. Provision can be made for your florist to have access to the synagogue before the wedding to put up the decorations, but please note that all florists' costs are at your expense. There may be a charge incurred for the caretakers' time in opening the synagogue.

Please note that:

- a protective covering must be provided by the florist to protect the synagogue floor from water stains.
- only the posts of the chuppah may be decorated — nothing is to be attached to the canopy.

## Time to Make a Will

**M**any people do not realise that marriage will nullify an existing Will, unless the Will was specifically drafted with this marriage in mind. Consult a legal adviser and make a new Will after your marriage. If you do not have a Will, this is an appropriate time to draft one

## Notifying Others of the Changes

**I**n the excitement preceding the wedding, it is easy to overlook some important items which may affect you after your marriage. You will be changing your single status, perhaps your address, and there may also be name changes. You should notify your banks, health insurance, Medicare, car registration and drivers licence, your superannuation fund, clubs and organisations you belong to and, of course, make changes to your passport.



# Chuppah Questions for the Couple

The following questions had been designed to help start your discussion about the traditions, the ritual and the logistics of making your wedding day one that is truly and personally significant to you forever.

## Part 1 Bedeken

- What is the location of the Bedeken?
- Does the room have at least a table and three chairs in it?
- Are you going to serve any drinks at the Bedeken?
- The groom and family will be in the room at least 15 minutes before the Bedeken but how and when is the bride arriving?
- Is the bride wearing a veil?
- What Ketubah are you using, does it need calligraphy work done in advance?
- Can both the bride and groom sign your names in Hebrew – do you need help?
- Who are your religious witnesses? Are they both Jewish?
- Who are your civil witnesses? Are they both Australian?

# Chuppah Questions for the Couple

## Part 2 Chuppah

- What Chuppah are you using?
- Do you have pole holders?
- What is the order of your processional?
- Are you circling? Who and how many times?
- Are you using your own Kiddush cups (if so one or two)?
- What rings are you using? Who will be holding them during the ceremony?
- What is the order of the recessional?

## Part 3 Yichud

- Have you found a location for yichud?
- Is there going to be food?
- When are you doing photos?

## Other Questions?

- Do you have a list of all the photos you want?
- Do you have a MC running the day or someone keeping you on time?



# Notes

Jot down any questions you may have for the rabbi or administrator





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